

Tuberculosis Facts – Testing for TB

What is TB?



“TB” is short for a disease called tuberculosis. TB is spread through the air from one person to another. TB germs are passed through the air when someone who is sick with **TB disease** of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, laughs, sings, or sneezes. Anyone near the sick person can breathe TB germs into their lungs.

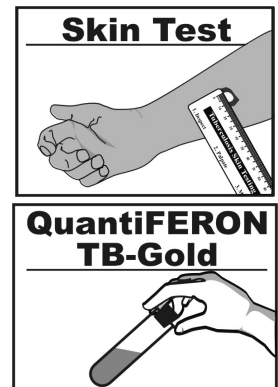
TB germs can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **latent TB infection**. This means you have only inactive (sleeping) TB germs in your body. The inactive germs cannot be passed on to anyone else. However, if these germs wake up or become active in your body and multiply, you will get sick with **TB disease**.

When TB germs are active (multiplying in your body), this is called **TB disease**. These germs usually attack the lungs. They can also attack other parts of the body, such as, the kidneys, brain, or spine. **TB disease** will make you sick. People with **TB disease** may spread the germs to people they spend time with every day.

How do I know if I have been infected with TB?

If you have been around someone who has **TB disease**, you should go to your doctor or your local health department for tests.

There are two tests that can be used to help detect TB. Usually a skin test is done. A small needle is used to put some testing material, called tuberculin, under the skin. In 2-3 days, you return to the health care worker who will check to see if there is a reaction to the test. In some cases, another test called QuantiFERON-TB Gold (QFT-G) is given. It is a blood test that measures how a person’s system reacts to the germs that cause TB.



To tell if someone has **TB disease**, other tests such as chest x-ray and a sample of sputum (phlegm that is coughed up from deep in the lungs) may be needed.

Note: If you have ever had a “positive” reaction to a TB skin test or if you have been treated with TB drugs in the past, tell your health care worker.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Tuberculosis Elimination

www.cdc.gov/tb
October 2007

